



MEDIA RELEASE

Northern Territory Scientist Discovers Many Arid Wetlands

A two-year project on Central Australian arid wetlands has revealed there are more than twice as many wetlands in this part of the world than previously documented.

Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts biodiversity conservation unit scientist Angus Duguid led the project with its findings contained in the recently completed *Wetlands in the Arid Northern Territory* report.

Mr Duguid said the project was the first of its kind in the arid parts of Australia and a building block for similar projects in the future.

“Prior to the project commencing it had been recognised there was a knowledge gap in our understanding of arid wetlands in Central Australia,” Mr Duguid said.

“So with the support from the National Heritage Trust, we were able to compile an extensive inventory of wetlands in the region and describe the variety of types and their conservation values.

“There had previously been a widely held perception this region contained very few wetlands but this project proved otherwise, with information recorded at 422 ground survey sites.

“The sites visited were just a small proportion of the region’s wetlands and our aim was to survey a representative sample.

“To be considered a wetland, an area must at least occasionally be wet for long enough that it is used by plants and animals that require waterlogging or inundation during their lifecycles and are visible to the naked eye.

“Even if they are filled only once every few decades, they may still be important for species conservation.

“The project covered 612,000 square kilometres through Central Australia and we were able to see that wetlands support a diverse and distinctive range of plants and animals.”

Mr Duguid said the survey component of the inventory benefited greatly from being carried out in a period of extremely high rainfall across much of the study area.

He said this resulted in many wetlands being observed while they were either inundated or while the effects of inundation were still evident in the vegetation.

The bulk of the project’s field work commenced in 2001 with time since then used to focus on data analyses, sampling and compiling and reviewing the 358 page report.

The report can now be found at <http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/wildlife/nature/aridwetlands.html>

Media Note _ For more information contact Angus Duguid today on 8951 8240. Mr Duguid is on leave from tomorrow and will be back at work on January 12.

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